

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07

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R 151623Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1444

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 243

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: OTELO, SPINOLA, SOARES CONTROVERSY

REF: LISBON 98

SUMMARY: BRIG. OTELO CARVALHO ACCUSES SPINOLA OF HAVING
THREATENED TO ASK FOR US INTERVENTION IN MOZAMBIQUE WHILE
SOARES PRESENT. SOARES REFUSES TO GET INVOLVED IN
CONTROVERSY. AFM MAY BE TRYING TO DESTROY SPINOLA'S
REPUTATION. END SUMMARY.

1. A NASTY BATTLE OF ACCUSATIONS BETWEEN COPCON LEADER
BRIG. OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO AND GENERAL SPINOLA HAS
TEMPORARILY CONCLUDED AFTER FOREIGN MINISTER SOARES REFUSED TO
GET INVOLVED. CONTROVERSY BEGAN WITH OTELO ASSERTING IN
INTERVIEW WITH LITERARY MAGAZINE BEFORE CHIRSTMAS THAT
DURING A DISCUSSION REGARDING DECOLONIZATION OF MOZAMBIQUE
LAST YEAR SPINOLA THREATENED TO ASK FOR USG OR SOUTH
AFRICAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN MOZAMBIQUE. OTELO
HAS STATED THAT SOARES WAS PRESENT WHEN SPINOLA MADE
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REMARKS AND CAN CORROBORATE HIS STATEMENT. SOARES

HAS STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO COMMENT, CITING INAPPROPRIATENESS OF HIS COMMENTING ON PRIVILEGED CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT AND NEED FOR MAINTENANCE OF NATIONAL UNITY.

2. SPINOLA TERMED OTELO'S ALLEGATIONS "FANTASTIC" AND TOTALLY FALSE. HE STATED IN LETTER TO PRESS THAT OTELO'S CHARGES PART OF "SYSTEMATIC COMAIGN BY OTELO TO DISCREDIT HIM," AND HAS THREATENED TO TAKE UNSPECIFIED (AND AS YET UNREALIZED) MEASURES WITH APPROPRIATE MILITARY AUTHORITIES AGAINST OTELO.

3. OTELO FOR HIS PART HAS STOOD FAST IN DEFENSE OF HIS ACCUSATIONS, ASSERTING THAT HE NOT OUT TO SMEAR GENERAL. THE FORMER PRESIDENT, CLAIMED OTELO IN SERIES OF PRESS INTERVIEWS, OFTEN FLIES OFF THE HANDLE IN DISCUSSIONS AND SAYS RASH THINGS IN WHICH HE DOES NOT REALLY BELIEVE. FURTHERMORE, CHARGES OTELO, SPINOLA HAS SHOWN AN "ENORMOUS POLITICAL WEAKNESS" IN TRYING TO HOLD BACK "AVALANCHE OF HISTORY," AND HAS COMPLETED HIS HISTORICAL ROLE.

4. COMMENT: WHETHER OR NOT SPINOLA ACTUALLY MADE THESE REMARKS RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT. A SPINOLA AIDE HAS TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT GENERAL HIMSELF IN RETROSPECT NOT ABSOLUTELY SURE WHAT WAS SAID DURING CONVERSATION IN QUESTION. IMPORTANCE OF EPISODE IS WHETHER IT HAS DAMAGED POLITICAL COMEBACK OF FORMER PRESIDENT.

JUDGING BY INTERVIEW RELEASED ON NEW YEAR'S EVE TO EXPRESSO (REFTEL), SPINOLA HAS NO INTENTION OF LEAVING POLITICS, AND THERE IS MUCH TALK AOUND TOWN OF SPINOLA'S FUTURE POLITICAL ROLE. SPINOLA UNDOUBTEDLY BELIEVES THAT AFM, ACTING THROUGH OTELO, IS SET ON DESTROYING HIS PRESITGE AS A POLITICIAN AND CREATING IMPRESSION THAT HE UNFIT FOR FUTURE POLITICAL ROLE. WHETHER THIS IN FACT IS AFM GOAL IS PURE CONJECTURE AT THIS POINT.

WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT SPINOLA STILL HAS AN IMPORTANT FOLLOWING WITHIN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN CIRCLES. WERE HE TO RUN FOR PRESIDENCY IN THE FUTURE HE WOULD HAVE A GOOD CHANCE TO WIN. THIS MUST WORRY THE AFM, WHICH CONSIDERS THE GENERAL A STAUNCH CONSERVATIVE. ONE ABVIOUS WAY TO GET AROUND THE OBSTACLE THAT SPINOLA REPRESENTS TO THEM WOULD BE TO DESTORY HIS IMAGE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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CHARACTER. SPINOLA LOOKS AT THIS INCIDENT AS ANOTHER STEP IN THAT DIRECTION.

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